Welcome to the first edition of Research.Culture, the newsletter of the Centre for Cultural Research. CCR has a broad research agenda with significant research partnerships across government agencies, business and the community sector.

This first edition coincides with some major changes in CCR. Firstly, Professor Ien Ang, who has charted the Centre's direction and success for many years, steps down as Director to take up an ARC professorial fellowship within the Centre. Ien remains part of the CCR of course!

Dr Greg Noble has taken up the Directorship in the interim, having had a long and productive association with the Centre. Greg is also currently managing a major ARC-funded study into ethnicity, cultural identity and schoolchildren's educational performance. Greg also manages the Centre's 'node' of the Australian Cultural research Network, coordinated through UQ.

CCR is forging a unique place in humanities and social scientific fields of practice as diverse as education and Westmead children's hospitals. The degree is aimed at mid-level and senior professionals (e.g. project or event managers, curators, strategic or policy developers, etc.) from the government and non-government sectors, as well as industry.

Professional doctorates are not new, however, this degree is interdisciplinary and not aimed at one profession. CCR has attracted potential students from fields of practice as diverse as Eco-Tourism, Aboriginal Heritage management and University International Student Administration.

Prof Bob Hodge, one of the DCR coordinators, has recently commented in the press on the value of the degree.

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"Some candidates may want to look at the culture of their own workplace".

CCR is aiming for a small intake in 2006, and there is still opportunity to promote the value of this degree to the diverse sectors it crosses. As a fee-based course, the expectation is that employers will see the appeal in supporting staff to undertake a degree that draws on and analyses practical issues and projects from the workplace.

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Follow Up Study for SBS

Ien Ang and Greg Noble, in collaboration with Jeffrey Brand (Bond University) and Jason Sternberg (QUT), have been commissioned by the Special Broadcasting Service to conduct research into the role of media use in the way young people from diverse cultural backgrounds define their cultural identities and their sense of belonging to Australia.

The study, dubbed Living Diversity 2, builds on the first Living Diversity study, which culminated in the highly successful report Living Diversity: Australia’s Multicultural Future, written by Ien Ang, Jeffrey Brand, Greg Noble and Derek Wilding (SBS, 2002).

The new study aims to improve SBS’s knowledge of existing and potential audiences through a better understanding of Australian young people as media consumers. Focus groups with culturally diverse young people (aged 16-40) will be held in different locations in metropolitan Sydney, Brisbane, and regional Western Australia. In commissioning this study SBS wishes to take leadership in promoting research that fills a gap in existing knowledge about diversity and media impacts in Australia. A report is expected to be published in early 2006.

Makeover Culture Examined

CCR PhD candidate Meredith Jones has submitted her thesis for examination. Entitled Makeover Culture: Landscapes of Cosmetic Surgery, the dissertation introduces the idea of ‘makeover culture’, a paradigm where the performance of becoming is more important than achieving a static point of completion or finality.

Cosmetic surgery is theorised as an important symptom and manufacturer of makeover culture, which values endless remaking, improving, renovating, importing and rejuvenating.

Meredith examines Cosmetic surgery through interviews with everyday recipients and surgeons, analyses of ‘extreme practitioners’ such as Lolo Ferrari and Michael Jackson, explorations of mediascapes and metaphorical work with postmodern architecture.

The thesis offers a feminist understanding of contemporary cosmetic surgery that is beyond ideas of agent and victim, that goes further than the rhetoric of ‘just don’t do it’, that sees more similarities than differences between women who choose cosmetic surgery and women who don’t’, and that positions the doctor/patient relationship inside a network of technologies and assemblages that includes many actors. It offers suggestions about how people, especially women, may live critically and constructively with cosmetic surgery in all its contradictory, concrete, discursive, and imaginary forms.

The thesis also acknowledges that there are complex pleasures and desires associated with cosmetic surgery, intertwined with its offensiveness and terrors.

CCR Research Secondment

Dr George Morgan joins CCR for second semester, 2005, working on a research project called Doing the Knowledge. The project is exploring the interface of three major transitions:

• The school to work transition of disadvantaged youth in Greater Western Sydney (GWS)
• The transition from an industrial economy to a “knowledge” economy that has taken place globally over the last 30 years
• The resulting generational transition in GWS where the drive to create ‘new workers’ has displaced the knowledges and subjectivities of older workers.

This study is part of a larger international collaborative study that is being coordinated by Prof Phil Cohen at the University of East London. UWS collaborators include Professor Bronwyn Davies from the School of Educaton.

George Morgan’s recent publications include:

■ (2005) with Scott Poynting and Cristina Rocha ‘Grafting Cultures: Longing and belonging in immigrants’ backyards’ Journal of Intercultural Studies
Dr. Franco Bianchini, (De Montford University, Leicester, UK), shared his latest research on the challenges of urban sprawl and cultural consumption in contemporary Europe at a recent CCR seminar.

Drawing on work with the UK government, Bianchini explained that cities such as London are suffering from **hypertrophy**, where development and sprawl render urban services and civic spaces dysfunctional largely because of poor planning or control of private sector interests.

Bianchini is critical of the multiplex shopping developments which are locating in both urban and suburban growth areas as lacking in cultural integrity. He explained the connections between these cultural voids (‘non-places’) and the **experience economy**, where cultural consumption is as predictable as a theme-park. Drawing from his recent publication, Bianchini cited the example of NikeTown in London as an “interactive museum of human performance in athletics...”, a consumption trend which sells an experience as a product.

Relating this to the cultural diversity predominant in many European cities, Bianchini critiqued urban development as being insensitive and monocultural. Meanwhile, he offered various solutions including a transcultural approach to urban planning, drawing upon essentialist ideas about a common experience of urban space to allow free expression of individuality.

Bianchini explained cultural planning as broader than an arts-based aesthetic definition culture which has affected European planning policy in the past. (An area where CCR has already had significant achievement in working with planners, developers and Councils in the Western Sydney region). Ultimately, he was arguing for a defence of the cultural resources and potential of diverse communities being coralled into urban blandness. Councils and higher government bodies in UK and Europe, he explained, have some way to go to systematically address this.

CCR has been awarded a $5,000 community engagement allowance for ‘best’ submission by a CAESS Research Centre to the Review of Community Engagement. The submission was described as ‘very thoughtful and comprehensive’.

The Centre has also been awarded two $1,500 community engagement allowances for ‘good practice’ partnerships, for the Driving Cultures research program coordinated by Greg Noble, Zoe Sofoulis and Sarah Redshaw, and the Cultural Planning in Greater Western Sydney initiatives coordinated by Elaine Lally, Ien Ang, Kay Anderson, Bob Hodge and Anne Hurni.

Recognising the potential and strength of CCRs collaborative research efforts, the Centre has also been advised that a $100,000 College grant will be made available to develop the Centre's broader community engagement agenda.

CCR participated in the recent Council for Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (CHASS) national dialogue with parliamentarians in Canberra, with both Elaine Lally and Kay Anderson meeting a number of federal MPs to discuss the importance of cultural research and to hear what federal politicians know about humanities-based research in Australia.

The aim of the national dialogue, called HASS on the Hill, was to lobby parliament to ensure humanities and social sciences were valued in contributing to Australia’s economic and social wellbeing. CHASS saw the event as the first stage in building a relationship that would give researchers an avenue to influence the national policy-making process.

One policy CHASS is keen to address is the R&D tax concession. While Australia’s Research and Development policy encourages industry investment in R&D through tax concessions, investment in the humanities, arts and social sciences generally does not qualify for the concession because such research doesn’t meet the criteria for innovation.

CHASS President, Malcolm Gillies, focussed on the issue of innovation in his National Press Club address which coincided with the HASS on the Hill event. "In re-thinking Australian innovation", he said, "we need to recognise that we’re dealing with a series of issues which are taking us from industrial models through knowledge models to talent models".

Elaine Lally explained that HASS on the Hill is an event all eligible researchers should attend at least once. “Meeting with individual politicians (and others) forces you to communicate what you’re doing to different audiences” she said.
Harvard Professor Visits CCR

The Harvard Anthropologist, Professor Michael Herzfeld, visited the CCR in mid-August, running a Master Class for postgraduate students and presenting a public talk at the Female Orphan School.

Professor Herzfeld specializes in the ethnography of southern Europe (especially Greece and Italy) and Thailand*. His current research interests include the construction of the past, the inculcation of social and cultural values, performance and social identity, historic conservation and artisanship.

The Master Class, entitled ‘Cultural intimacy and Social Poetics: a new agenda for Cultural Research’, addressed questions around the cultural dynamics of the transnational context of contemporary societies. It focused on the role of fieldwork and interdisciplinarity in analysing everyday life in these societies.

The public talk, entitled ‘Capital Concerns: Nation-States, Markets, and the Tribulations of the Traditional’, explored the construction of national images for tourist consumption as well as for internal self-representation in Greece, Italy, and Thailand. Professor Herzfeld talked about the ways in which notions such as “tradition” become a means of controlling access to modernity at local, national, and international levels. With impacts on the contentious issues of national heritage and historic conservation.

Professor Herzfeld’s visit was partly sponsored by the Cultural Research Network, an ARC initiative. The goal of the Cultural Research Network is to develop, from its initial disciplinary base in cultural, media, and communications studies, collaborative links with researchers from cultural history, cultural geography, cultural anthropology, and creative industries. The intention is to develop the capacity for innovative research into media and cultural technologies, cultural literacies, cultural histories, geographies, and identities, the Network’s main focuses.

ARC Cultural Research Network

The Network will circulate people as well as ideas and information, bringing established Australian researchers into direct contact with postgraduates and young researchers in these fields, and pursuing international linkages.

As well as its major funding from the ARC, the CRN is supported by Murdoch University, Queensland University of Technology, the University of Melbourne, the University of New South Wales, the University of Technology, Sydney, the University of South Australia, the University of Western Sydney, and the University of Queensland, and has 43 participants in 13 universities around the country.

The Cultural Research Network’s disciplinary base is in cultural, media and communications studies.

From this foundation it has built collaborative links with researchers from cultural history, cultural geography, cultural anthropology and creative industries to develop the capacity for innovative research into media and cultural technologies, cultural literacies, cultural histories, geographies and identities.

* Prof Herzfeld is the author of many articles and books, including The Poetics of Manhood (1985), The Social Production of Indifference (1992), Cultural Intimacy (1997) and Body Impolitic (2003). He has served as President of the Modern Greek Studies Association and the Society for Anthropology of Europe.

UK Visitors Share Insights

CCR hosted a seminar by Prue Chamberlayne (Open University) and Tom Wengraf (Middlesex University and University of East London) recently, entitled The culture of an emancipatory organisation in difficult times: the Bromley by Bow Healthy Living Centre experience.

The seminar presented an analysis of the success of an arts-based community centre serving an impoverished London community, locating this within the Blair gov’ts efforts at creative community renewal projects.

Prof. Ien Ang has taken up her ARC Professorial Fellowship to develop the work she has pioneered in cultural research. The 5-year study Cultural Research for the 21st Century, will examine the cultural complexity that characterises contemporary societies and communities and how cultural intelligence is developed and applied in public institutions and communities.

"It's commonplace to think of Australia as a culturally diverse place and we know that this diversity is more than a neat 'mosaic' of peoples with different foods, beliefs and lifestyles", Prof. Ang said.

"Many Australians live 'hybrid' lives influenced by a multitude of cultures in a range of ways, creating culturally complex communities", she said.

"That cultural complexity affects social and professional practices and so it's important to understand the practical impact of that cultural complexity on public policy, institutions and the broader community", Ang said.

Prof. Ang draws upon the notion of cultural intelligence as the capability of organisations and communities to adapt to new, varying and dynamic cultural circumstances. Part of the project will guide a doctoral student on research into regional and urban development in Western Sydney and how various public authorities deal with or understand the region's increasing cultural diversity.

A broader aim of the project is to demonstrate and showcase the value of cultural research to Australian social and economic development by explaining how collaborations between cultural researchers and industry or community partners have delivered practical outcomes and improved capacity to manage and anticipate the impacts of diversity and complexity.

Prof. Ang can be contacted via: i.ang@uws.edu.au

Cultural Intelligence for a Complex World
The overall aim is to deliver new understanding of how young drivers view themselves and how the wider community views young drivers, including the perception and impact of various driving sub-cultures. As Sydney, and Australia more generally, comes to rely on cars as the dominant mode of local and inter-urban transport, acknowledging driving as a cultural activity and the cultures that intersect with young drivers is essential to understanding how services, policy and planning respond.

From 2007, the Federal Minister for Education, Brendon Nelson, plans to implement a radical policy to hold researchers and universities accountable for the research they are undertaking.

The Research Quality Framework, or RQF, will shortly be trialled at a number of universities based on recent consultation across the sector. The biggest challenge for researchers will be in how the RQF intends to measure the quality (rather than quantity), of work produced and its impact beyond Academia.

The preferred model has just been released for comment and a trial, with the first RQF round to scrutinise researcher 'output' over at least the 3 years from 2004-06. At the individual level, this will mean submitting a portfolio of possibly 4 pieces of work for assessment within a University-approved research strength.

Where Universities currently receive funding for the amount of research and research dollars they attract, funding would now be conditional on a quality and impact rating likely to be judged by approximately 15 discipline-based committees. The model just released envisages committees that include international and overseas-based peers plus a small number of non-academic 'experts' or practitioners.

Experience from the UK, where a similar mechanism was introduced some years ago drove institutional behaviour to shuffle their research strengths and individual researchers to maximise their chances of getting rewarded under a 5 star rating system (con't page 6)...

Driving Cultures Study...

(Con't from page 1)

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More information: g.noble@uws.edu.au or z.sofoulis@uws.edu.au

A one day forum

Improving accessibility transport and social sustainability

Opening Address
Professor Peter Newman
NSW Sustainability Commissioner

Keynote Speaker
Dr Karen Lucas
Transport Studies Group
University of Westminster, UK

Professor Bill Randolph
Director
City Futures
University of NSW

Dr Jago Dodson
Senior Research Fellow
Urban Research Program
Griffith University, Qld

Dr Janet Stanley
Research and Policy Manager
Brotherhood of St Laurence

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Wednesday
5 October, 2005
Crowne Plaza Hotel
Phillip Street
Parramatta
9:00am — 4:30pm
Registration from 8:30 am
Registration fee: $75.00

How will more people in Sydney get to the places they need to go and do the things they need to do reasonably easily, affordably and safely?
Current CCR Projects

- The Humanities Beyond Humanism: Race, Nature and the Human in Australia from Enlightenment to Federation - Funding: ARC Discovery. CCR Researcher: Prof Kay Anderson
- Cultural Research for the 21st Century: Building Cultural Intelligence for a Complex World - Funding: ARC Discovery. Researchers: Prof Ien Ang
- Anti-Ageing Devices: On the Cultural politics of Staying Young in a Globalised World - Funding: ARC Discovery. CCR Researcher: Dr B. Nielson
- Cross-Cultural Lar Nikins in a neo-Liberal World: ideology and myth in a postmodern Australia, Mexico and Brazil - Funding: ARC Discovery. CCR Researcher: Prof Bob Hodge
- The Visual Meditation of a Complex Narrative: TGH Strehlow's Journey to Horseshoe Bend - Funding: ARC Discovery. Researcher: Dr H. Cohen
- Negotiating the Challenge of Cultural Diversity in Children's Health Care: The Australian Context - Funding: ARC Linkage/Sth East Sydney Area Health, Sydney and Westmead Children's Hospitals, Sth West Area Health. CCR Researchers: Prof. L. Ang, Dr S. Chalmers
- Discipline and Diversity: Cultural Practices and Dispositions of Learning - Funding: ARC Linkage/NSW DET. CCR Researcher: Dr Greg Noble
- Cultural Research Network - Funding: ARC. CCR Researchers: Dr Greg Noble, Dr Zoe Sofoulis, Prof Ien Ang (Lead institution - UQ)
- Reconceptualising Heritage Collections: multidisciplinary approaches to museum collections and documentation - Funding: ARC Linkage/Powerhouse Museum. CCR Researcher: Dr Fiona Cameron
- Backpacker Cultures, Residential Communities, and the Construction of Tourist Spaces and Landscapes: A Regional Study of Changing Tourism Dynamics in Sydney - Funding: ARC Linkage/5 Local Councils - Sydney City, Nth Sydney, Woollahra, Waverly Randwick & Manly. CCR Researchers: Dr F. Allon, Prof K. Anderson, Prof R. Bushell
- Cultural Mapping Tool for Western Sydney - Funding: ARC Linkage/WSROC. CCR Researchers: Dr E. Lally, Prof B. Hodge
- Communities Across Borders: The Transnational Dynamics of emerging and stateless refugee groups in Australia - Funding: ARC Postdoctoral Fellowship. CCR Researchers: Dr G. Gow
- Transport and social exclusion in Western Sydney - Funding: UWS/Western Sydney Community Forum. CCR Researcher: A. Hurni
- Diverse strategies for diverse carers: the cultural context of family carers in NSW - Funding: Dept of Ageing, Disability and Health. CCR Researchers: Dr S. Chalmers, Dr B. Nielson
- Creative Industries Hub for Fairfield: a scoping study - Funding: Fairfield City Council. CCR Researcher: Dr E. Lally
- Transforming Drivers: Driving as Social, Cultural and Gendered Practice - Funding: ARC Linkage/NRMA. CCR Researchers: Dr Z. Sofoulis, Dr G. Noble, Dr S. Redshaw
- Living Diversity 2 - Funding: SBS Broadcasting. CCR Researchers: Prof I. Ang, Dr G. Noble
- Doing the Knowledge: Youth Transition in Marrickville - Funding: Marrickville Community History Group. CCR Researcher: Dr G. Morgan

Quality Control...

At the very least, conceptualising research for its applied benefits and building partnerships early will be critically important for every researcher. This is an area of demonstrable success for CCR, but is now likely to be the focus of research for all research centres Australia-wide.

One of the more questionable issues is how to measure impact. In the case of government policy, impact may take a long time to emerge. Providing evidence (within a RQF reporting round) that research produces a major social or cultural change will continue to confront humanities and social science researchers. There isn’t a strong tradition for patenting social or cultural knowledge while waiting for ideas and analyses to be taken up.

CCR’s research success through community engagement, however, (see article p.3), may become assessable mode of impact.

A common recommendation has been that the RQF measure research efforts over a 5-6 year period. This may well occur after the first round, so most institutions expect the first round will be used to iron out the inevitable problems associated with such a complex instrument.

There are other contentious issues unresolved in the model, and there are major government resourcing matters that have not yet been disclosed.

While the RQF will be a work-in-progress when it is rolled out in 2007, it is something all researchers need to anticipate now.